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EVALUATING THE FOREIGN-STUDY PROGRAM.

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PUB DATE DEC 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.56 14P.

DESCRIPTORS- *STUDY ABROAD, *UNDERGRADUATE STUDY, *ACADEMIC STANDARDS, *MODERN LANGUAGES, PROGRAM EVALUATION, PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT,

A SUPERIOR STUDY-ABROAD PROGRAM SHOULD BE CONCERNED WITH THE BALANCE IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM BETWEEN FOREIGN UNIVERSITY COURSES AND THOSE ESPECIALLY PLANNED FOR AMERICAN STUDENTS, AND THE CAREFUL TRANSPOSITION OF GRADING AND CREDIT ALLOWANCES TO AMERICAN STANDARDS. OTHER AREAS TO CONSIDER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROGRAMS ARE A HIGHLY INFORMATIVE CATALOG WITH DETAILS OF ALL MAJOR ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM, AN ADMISSIONS POLICY THAT CONSIDERS SCHOLARSHIP, CHARACTER, HEALTH, AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY, AND A SOUND ORIENTATION PROGRAM. NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED ARE THE LENGTH OF THE SOJOURN ABROAD, THE SUITABILITY OF LODGINGS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL CONTACTS WITH THE NATIVES, THE INTEGRATION OF SUPERVISED GROUP TRAVEL WITH THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, THE QUALIFICATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESIDENT DIRECTOR, AND THE AMOUNT OF THE COST ALLOCATED TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AS COMPARED WITH OTHER ITEMS. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE FRENCH REVIEW," VOLUME 40, NUMBER 3, DECEMBER 1966, PAGES 400-410. (GJ)

ED013020

Reprinted from THE FRENCH REVIEW
Vol. XL, No. 3, December 1966
Printed in U.S.A.

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FL 000 296

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Evaluating the Foreign-Study Program

by Theodore H. Rupp

AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION'S RAPID ENDORSEMENT of the idea of a sojourn abroad for its undergraduate students has led to a relatively sudden proliferation of all types of organized study-abroad programs. This growth, stimulated by well-intentioned educators as well as by profit-motivated travel agents, has been largely uncontrolled. The result has been a small minority of good programs and, in the absence of any accrediting agency, a large number of shoddy ones, whose chief requirement for admission appears to be the ability to pay the cost.[1] How can the student and his parents or, more importantly, the college professors and deans to whom they turn for advice distinguish one from the other?

Until some type of accrediting agency is established, I should like to submit ten questions which can serve as a kind of measuring device for evaluating an undergraduate foreign-study program, having in mind particularly institutions sending foreign-language majors (prospective teachers, linguists, diplomats, etc.).[2] (In addition, they could well serve as a guide for an institution thinking of establishing such a program). The questions are, as follows:

I. How informative is its catalogue or brochure?
II. How selective is its admissions policy?
III. What kind of orientation program is offered?
IV. What is the length of the stay abroad?
V. What is the nature of the academic program, particularly in respect to the ratio between courses designed for foreigners in general or for the Program students in particular and those taught for native students in the *Faculté* or university proper?
VI. On what basis are grades and credits awarded, and over a several-year period what have been the average grades and credits assigned to students in the Program?

[1] See Stephen A. Freeman, "Undergraduate Study Abroad: Objectives and Problems," in IJAL, XXII (1966), 185, for a thorough discussion of the current state of affairs.

[2] For a more general treatment see Council on Student Travel, *A Guide to Institutional Self-Study and Evaluation of Educational Programs Abroad* (New York, 1965).

VII. What are the provisions for lodging, and how much attention has been given to arranging for social contacts with the natives of that country?

VIII. Is travel while abroad integrated into the educational program, or are the students entirely on their own?

IX. What are the qualifications of the resident director, and what responsibilities are entrusted to him?

X. What does it cost?

As we examine these questions in turn, it should be understood that the standards I describe are those required for excellence. Few, if any, programs come close to meeting them all. Most fall short by a wide margin.

I. *Catalogue.* It should contain as a minimum the following information: objectives, precise requirements for eligibility, description of living arrangements and cultural activities, medical care, academic and organized-travel program, break-down of costs, statement on the role and authority of the resident director with a description of the incumbent and his qualifications, a calendar of the school year, and procedure for application and payment of fees. A section should be devoted to concise regulations concerning class attendance, participation in group tours, use of the foreign language among the students, health insurance, possession of motor vehicles, individual tourism, amount of baggage, and personal conduct, along with a clear statement of the disciplinary procedure infractions will entail. The policy in regard to refunds should also be stated.

The section devoted to the academic and educational-travel program should be specific. All the required non-*Faculté* courses should be listed by title with a brief description to include the number of class hours per week. Since it is impossible to know in advance what *Faculté* courses will be given, a representative list of similar courses offered in the past should be included among the course descriptions. In all cases the number of semester hours of credit to be earned should be indicated and the manner of arriving at the grade in each course explained. Several typical weekly schedules of former students are also very desirable.

If group tours have been planned, these should be described in detail with their educational objectives and the method for realizing these objectives. The names of the agencies handling travel and touring should be given, but it should be clearly stated that the program does assume responsibility for failure of these agencies to provide the services described. Effort should be made to avoid over-glamorizing this part of the catalogue, for it is here that all too often the student gains the hard-to-eradicate impression that the sojourn abroad is really intended to be a long joy ride.

II. *Admission Policy.* On the *academic* side I would expect the program

to require three years of the foreign language in high school and eighteen semester hours in college with grades of B or better which include some foundation in the country's history, geography, art, and literature. In addition, for screening purposes I would want the program to require scores on the MLA Cooperative Tests for the second-year college level, with special emphasis on the speaking and listening sections, and also at least a letter, but preferably a carefully constructed questionnaire, from one of his professors to give further insight into the student's linguistic strengths and weaknesses.

On the *character* side: a questionnaire to be sent to the personnel dean to provide information on the student's personal conduct. Where the questionnaire turns up a history of infractions of discipline and of uncooperativeness, that student is a poor risk and is better left at home. The mere existence of such a screening device may well discourage such a student from applying.

On the *physical* side: another questionnaire to be filled out by the college physician after a thorough examination to insure fitness for a generally more rugged existence (such as, much more walking) than the student has in the United States. This may eliminate a tiny fraction, but it is a favor to the individuals themselves and particularly to the resident director, who must suffer the disproportionate amount of anxiety caused by a few chronic cases.

On the *psychological* side: a fourth questionnaire to be signed by the college psychologist or guidance director to identify students with psychic or emotional weaknesses. It is quite possible that such weaknesses will go undetected until subjected to stresses abroad, but if they have already shown up, this student, too, for his own sake (if not for the resident director's) is better left at home.

Such an admissions policy may seem too selective to be realistic and is in fact observed by only a bare minimum of existing programs, but it represents the key to success. Students who have been carefully screened can generally be depended upon to derive greater profit from their courses sooner, to conduct themselves creditably under pressure, and to exercise responsibly the relatively greater freedom given to them abroad. Furthermore, once a program acquires a reputation for careful screening, much of the chaff abandons in advance any attempt to compete for admission against the wheat. If a quality program can stick to its guns for the first several years, its policy of selectivity will pay off in terms of economic viability.

III. *Orientation*. If the group travels by ship, orientation sessions should be conducted during the voyage and should serve as preparation for the

immediate linguistic and cultural situations to be encountered upon arrival at the foreign destination.

The group should arrive at the university no less than three weeks before the opening of the fall term and should continue their orientation with a five-day-per-week schedule of instruction similar to the one arranged for the Pennsylvania state colleges group at Besançon:

1st hour: introduction to the customs of the country.
2nd hour: grammar and syntax correction.
3rd hour: structural drill in the language laboratory.
4th hour: pronunciation correction
5th hour: phonetics drill in the language laboratory.
6th hour: controlled conversation in small groups, each one under a different instructor.
Weekends: excursions, social events.

No academic credit should be given. There are, of course, other ways of providing orientation, but it must be intensive, practical, and well-constructed.

IV. *Length of Stay:* no less than the *academic year*. Summer programs are practically always designed exclusively for foreigners in special institutes and, except as means of brush-up, quick orientation to the foreign country, or vacations, are no substitute for following a serious academic routine from the beginning of the school year to final examinations at the end.

The nine-or-ten month period makes it possible to become thoroughly familiar with the climate (meteorological and political), holidays, festivals, sports, and customs of the inhabitants, not to mention their language, and allows time for educational travel. A shorter period reduces the opportunities for learning and practicing the language and makes impossible the pursuit of bona fide university courses from beginning to end in the company of the native students.

V. *Academic Program.* This is, of course, the essential ingredient and requires the most careful planning of all the aspects of foreign study, for even the best American undergraduate is not prepared to cope with a full schedule in the *Faculté*, taking courses designed solely for the native student. He may, however, find much of the work offered in the attached institutes for foreigners to be much too elementary to constitute college-level courses. (I have seen examples, counting for college credit, which are actually on the junior-high level.) It is also quite likely that the existing foreign instruction will not require or even offer "practical work," like

exercises, written assignments, recitation, and quizzes even in courses in the mechanics of the language, where our students so sorely need it.

Thus, the Program will have to select the courses in the institute for foreigners considered advanced enough to be a challenge to the American students and those courses in the *Faculté* not considered beyond their capacities. In addition, it will probably be necessary to add at least one special course in the mechanics of the language exclusively for the American group and to supplement one-hour-per-week courses offered in the school for foreigners with an extra hour for the Program students to make practical work possible. A *must* is the provision of tutors for selected university courses. These are advanced native students who attend the *Faculté* courses and conduct one-hour-per-week group tutorial sessions in which they are instructed to employ questioning, discussion, written assignments, and quizzes, so that the American student may derive maximum benefit from lectures which might otherwise have less meaning for him. Such a system also serves to enforce attendance at lectures and requires the student to do the vitally necessary reading.

The weekly schedule should consist of no less than fifteen hours per week in class, with attendance *required*, and might resemble the following, which was arranged by contract between the Pennsylvania state colleges program and the University of Besançon:

Oral and Written Expression—3 hrs. Taught as a special course for the Program and entailing considerable practical work, written assignments, and oral practice. The content deals primarily with contemporary life and customs.

Phonetics—2 hrs.
Translation (from English to French —2 hrs.)

Given in the institute for foreigners (*Cours Annuel*) *one* hour per week. The *second* hour given exclusively for the American group.

"*Explication de textes*"—2 hrs.

Geography of France—1 hr.

Given in the *Faculté* on the *propédeutique*, or first-year level.

History of France—1 hr.
Introduction to French literature—2 hrs.

Specialized course in French literature—1 hr.
Tutorial for above course—1 hr.
and/or

Given in the *Faculté* for the French student. French student

Specialized course in philology—1 hr. *Tutorial for above course*—1 hr.	tutors meet Program students in special sessions.

Language laboratory structural drills—2 hrs. non-credit
Language laboratory phonetic drill—1 hr. non-credit
Lecture series on French culture—3 hrs. non-credit (art, music, current events, customs, etc.)

Free auditing anywhere in the *Faculté*	Some of our students went to courses in psychology, philosophy, history, Spanish, German, Latin, geography, etc.

Such a program as the foregoing obviously must be established through negotiations with the foreign university and should be formalized by contract or convention for the protection of both parties. What appears here is intended as a sample of what can be done. Much will depend on what is available and also on the objectives of the particular program and the needs of its students. As most of ours will be French teachers in high school or college, the program was tailored to their needs, as well as to the strengths of the University of Besançon.

VI. *Grades and Credits.* They would depend entirely on successful passing of written examinations (and in some courses oral) in *each* course prepared and graded by the instructors following special arrangements made by the resident director. Such was the system followed at Besançon. The resident director should be responsible for indoctrinating the native instructors as to the desired standards and should have final authority on the grades assigned to each student. It is his job to "translate" the grades into the American system and to report each student's grades for each course to the administrative office of the Program. This office in turn should prepare transcripts showing each individual course, its grade, and credit, with the title translated into English for the benefit of registrars. I would disapprove of a system under which all courses are lumped together into one "package" and reported with one grade and a lump sum of credits, for in this way it is impossible to see how well or how poorly the student did in the particular areas. This system also lends itself to abuse by way of gratuitous grades and credits.

In evaluating a foreign-study program I would want to see a grade survey over at least a two or three year period. I would expect to see very few high grades; in fact, given the tremendous difference between the foreign system and ours, I would expect the students to average somewhat

lower grades than they made at home in spite of careful screening at the outset.

VII. *Lodging and Social Contacts.* For worrisome parents at least (and particularly where girls are concerned), the ideal situation would probably be to house every student with a good, middle-class family having children around the same age who treat the student like a brother or a sister. Such an ideal, if it ever existed, is impossible to realize on the scale a program requires, and where a program guarantees lodging with private families I would ask questions, for it is quite possible that the student will be exploited, whether as a baby-sitter, English tutor, or simply as a "locataire." Some programs try to scatter their students among a number of *pensions* lodging native students. However, even this type of housing is becoming more and more difficult to find as university enrollments mount, and it is probable that programs will be forced more and more to try to compete with the native students for space in the university dormitories. It is of the utmost importance, however, that the students be dispersed among the native students so as to minimize the natural tendency of the American students to associate with one another. Dispersing is no guarantee of integration with the natives, but failure to do so can have an almost catastrophic effect on the development of fluency.

Contacts between the American students and the natives of the host country, whether in the residence or elsewhere, rarely occur spontaneously, but must be diligently cultivated. Thus, the Program should enter into a written agreement (as the Pennsylvania program did at Besançon) with the foreign equivalent of Personnel Services, which usually has an office for assistance to foreigners (*Service d'accueil*), to take the initiative in the following:

1) arranging for receptions, teas, dances, and the like to which native students are invited;
2) soliciting invitations to the homes of hospitable private citizens;
3) serving as a relay-station between the American students and families seeking part-time English tutors or baby-sitters, church youth and scouting organizations, choruses and other musical groups, and sports clubs;
4) organizing guided tours to local industries, schools, and governmental bureaus, weekend excursions in the region, and extended bus tours during the vacation periods;
5) obtaining for each student a season ticket or adequate advance information to enable him to profit from the cultural events available to the community—such as, plays, art films, recitals, operas, etc.

If such a bureau should not exist at the university, it is the responsibility

of the resident director of the Program to attempt to duplicate the services listed. This is difficult, but to a considerable extent the Program's right to claim "immersion in the culture" as one of its principal objectives will depend on the resident director's success.

VIII. *Travel* should constitute an integral part of the total educational experience, thus of the basic cost, and as such merits careful, long-range planning and required participation by the students without academic credit. For maximum economy and control, touring should be organized on a group basis and conducted by competent guides. As a general principle group tours should be restricted to the host country because of the time element and should take place only during weekends and vacations. Independent travel should be possible but kept to a minimum and not permitted at the expense of class time.

IX. *Resident Director*. The man or woman filling this position is the key to the success of the program. He (or she) should preferably be an American or at least a person thoroughly acquainted with the American student and American education, fluent in the foreign language, mature, psychologically stable, and possessing a record of successful experience in both teaching and administration.

He must have complete on-the-scene authority, with the right and the machinery to send refractory students home promptly and expeditiously. He must be concerned with the personal behavior of his charges insofar as it affects the group or relations with the university (with particular reference to the dormitory), their academic zeal and progress, their attendance at courses and on tours, and their mental and physical health. He must treat his students like responsible adults, knowing that they are thus more likely to behave responsibly, but he must also know that they are only on the threshold of adulthood and still *need* a firm hand to guide them and occasionally to correct them. He must assure the carrying-out of the terms of the contract with the university on both the social and academic sides. He must maintain a close relationship with the native instructors to insure that the needs of the American students are met and that the instructors understand and observe the standards of the Program. He may and should do some of the teaching himself in order to judge the progress of his group and correct their weaknesses and is thus competent to assume final control over grades and credits. One of the earmarks of a good program is a no-English rule, and the resident director will do his utmost to instill in his students the *desire* to observe it. Finally, a most important responsibility, which should be made known to all the students in advance, is a short written evaluation of each one of them at the conclu-

sion of the year, appraising his comportment, progress, achievement, and attitude, which should be submitted to the student's home college.[3]

Of course, prospective students, deans, faculty advisors, and parents cannot ordinarily be sure that the resident director is qualified for this most demanding of jobs, but they should be suspicious of a program which pays little or no attention to the matter in its brochure. They should rightfully expect to see considerable space devoted to the individual and his competence for the position. By the same token, institutions planning a program or evaluating one in existence should know that the resident director can, in a large sense, make or break a program.[4]

X. *Cost.* This factor is so variable as to prohibit giving specific figures, but several guide-lines can enable one to determine whether the money is being efficiently spent. As stated in connection with the catalogue, the Program should publish a break-down of costs to show how much the student spends on transportation to and from the foreign university, on room and board, on educational excursions and tours, and on instruction. Publishing the cost of administrative overhead is not a requirement, but it would be a help in evaluation.

The cost of transportation will vary downward according to whether air or sea is used and, if the latter, whether or not it is a student ship. Valid arguments can be presented to justify any of these—that is, airliner, commercial steamer, or student ship, with the latter being least comfortable but also least expensive.

The cost of room and board will vary according to the country and according to whether private homes, *pensions*, hotels, or university dormitories and restaurants are used. Since most foreign university dormitories and restaurants are subsidized by the government, the students receive a tremendous bargain, which generally applies equally to foreign students. Thus, programs utilizing dormitories and student restaurants should pass the saving on to the students.

The cost of excursions and tours will depend on whether private travel agencies conduct them or whether they are sponsored by a bureau of the university. The latter can effect economies by employing students as guides and by arranging for lodging and meals at other universities on the way or at youth hostels.

The cost of instruction will vary according to the degree to which the Program provides special courses for its students. Since the instruction

[3] See T. Rupp, "The Junior Year Abroad—Some Second Thoughts," in *The Bulletin* of the Pennsylvania Modern Language Association, XLIV (1965), for a description of some of the problems of a resident director.

[4] *Ibid.*

at foreign universities is completely subsidized by the government, all the Program has to pay to admit each student to any or all university courses is a very small registration fee. However, as even the most carefully selected American undergraduate is most unlikely to be prepared for an entire schedule of regular university courses, the type of program earlier described must be specially designed for him. This means paying salaries to special instructors and tutors and extra fees for special examinations. Only where courses can be taken in the institute for foreigners or in the *Faculté* with the native students can the Program profit by government-subsidized instruction, and these will constitute perhaps no more than half of the student's total weekly schedule. Thus, the best program will be the one spending the most for instruction. Skimping here can be very revealing. If a program, be it a single institution or a cooperative, cannot afford to organize a carefully custom-tailored academic curriculum for carefully selected undergraduates, it would do well, in my opinion, to abandon the project or reorganize it for the graduate student, who generally should be capable of taking the bulk of his work in the *Faculté*.

Administrative costs are also variable, depending on whether the sponsoring institution is privately or publicly supported, how much of the administrative overhead is subsidized by the sponsoring institution, and on the magnitude of the salaries paid. The salaries involved are those of the Program director on the home campus (on a part-time basis), of a secretary, of the resident director, and of a part-time secretary for him. If the resident director is given a housing allowance and car mileage, these items will increase the total of the administrative costs. In addition to salaries, the catalogue or brochure represents a substantial administrative expense. This, too, is variable, however, according to the print, quality of paper, the number of pictures, and the number of pages. The amount of advertising deemed necessary to attract outstanding applicants is another factor.

Cost, then, as a criterion for evaluation is meaningful insofar as comparison can be made with the same items in other programs and insofar as they permit making judgments on the basis of the proportion of money expended for the various aspects of the program. The most expensive program is not necessarily the best nor the least expensive the worst. What counts most is the percentage of the total expended on instruction.

In this paper I have raised the question as to how it is possible to distinguish a superior undergraduate study-abroad program from an inferior one. To resolve the problem I have suggested a ten-question test to which any such program can be submitted, and I have offered the answers which are those required for a rating of superior. It may be argued that I have been unrealistic and that such high standards when applied to programs

for undergraduates will result in depriving large numbers of American students of the opportunity to study abroad. I would maintain, however, that there are enough properly-qualified students and enough funds available from one source or another to support high-quality programs. The poorly-qualified students, I would insist, should spend their junior year at home—out of fairness to themselves, their college, their country, and the foreign university.

This is not to say that I believe in foreign study for only a tiny élite, but I would advocate that much of the emphasis on the *undergraduate* level be transferred to the *post-graduate* level, at which stage our students are linguistically, intellectually, and psychologically better prepared to cope with the difficulties inherent in foreign study. At this stage they do not require as much screening and supervision and can take the bulk of their work in the *Faculté*, thus eliminating major expense. The undergraduate programs willing and able to pay the price that quality demands will still continue to attract their share of qualified undergraduates. The rest of the programs should either close up shop or concentrate their energies on providing opportunities for qualified graduates.

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